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STATE DEPT FOR WHA/CCA

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TAGS: [PHUM](#) [PREL](#) [KDEM](#) [SOCI](#) [CU](#)
SUBJECT: CUBA HUMAN RIGHTS ROUNDUP

REF: A. HAVANA 9060

[1](#)B. HAVANA 8986

Classified By: Charge d'Affaires Alex Lee for Reason 1.4(d).

[1](#)1. (C) Summary: Leading Cuban dissident Martha Beatriz Roque is recovering after being roughed up by Communist militants outside her home. Roque, weary but defiant, met with COM April 29 and expressed pleasure with the wide media coverage of the incident and subsequent foreign-government attention. Roque says she had heard that ousted Politburo member Juan Carlos Robinson Agramonte is being held at a notorious State Security prison. Meanwhile, a dissident doctor who was recently detained by police says GOC guards posted outside USINT signed a declaration against him. The "Ladies in White" have planned a Mother's Day activity. Independent journalists had little to celebrate on World Press Freedom Day. Hunger-striking dissident Guillermo Farinas says GOC agents have revised his academic file and lowered his GPA. Fabio Prieto Llorente, one of the 75 dissidents jailed in March 2003, has been placed in a punishment cell. Twenty-five dissidents held a recent vigil that was not raided or even disrupted by the GOC. A Presbyterian minister told us why you've gotta watch what you say. End Summary.

[1](#)2. (C) Leading pro-democracy activist Martha Beatriz Roque met with the COM on April 29, three days after Communist militants outside her home left her red and bruised, with a ripped skirt. The mob prevented her from participating in a USINT-organized videoconference. Roque, defiant, vowed to continue her activities, and reveled in the attention from the French, Polish and other Embassies that sent representatives, flowers or both. Roque said she had received 400 expressions of concern, and expressed satisfaction over the considerable media coverage generated by the attack. Roque told the COM she had inside information on the fate of Juan Carlos Robinson Agramonte, the Politburo member booted on April 28 for improper conduct and attitude. Roque said a member of the Central Committee of the Communist Party (CP) had informed a confidant of Roque's that Robinson is being held at Villa Marista, the State Security prison modeled after the KGB's Lubyanka, and designed to break the spirit. "Robinson must have done something wrong," she said, comparing him to a senior Sugar Ministry official who, years ago, publicly called the GOC's production targets unrealistic. "The guy, Borrego, was fired, and called a failure. He learned you can't say that kind of thing."

DISSIDENT DOCTOR DETAINED

[1](#)3. (C) The day before militants assaulted Roque, others held an "act of repudiation" at the home of dissident doctor Darsi

Ferrer. Ferrer was unscathed, but on April 26, after visiting one of USINT's Internet Centers, he was picked up by a patrol car and taken, without explanation, to a police station. Ferrer told us he was placed in a cell near the station's entrance, and to his surprise, in walked three members of SEPISA, the GOC embassy "protection" force, all assigned to posts near USINT (where they inspect the papers of would-be visitors). He said each guard signed a sheet of paper and then left. Later, Ferrer said, when he was being moved within the police station, he was able to look at the document in question. He said it is a declaration that accuses the doctor of publicly disrespecting Fidel Castro at the SEPISA post -- an assertion Ferrer denies. Ferrer was warned he'd be taken to Villa Marista, but was freed.

"LADIES IN WHITE" PLAN MAY 14 ACTION

¶4. (C) Leading "Lady in White" Laura Pollan told us on May 3 that her group, joint winners of the 2005 Sakarov Prize, plans to hold a special activity on Mother's Day, May 14. Before attending Mass and carrying out their weekly march calling for the liberation of their political-prisoner loved ones, the Ladies intend to lay flowers at the Monument to Leonor Perez, the mother of national hero Jose Marti. Last Mother's Day, as the Ladies marched in front of Santa Rita church, a large, GOC-directed group of female counter-protestors confronted the Ladies. This time, Pollan said, they'll hold the activity before Mass to throw off the GOC.

HAPPY PRESS-FREEDOM DAY

¶5. (C) Cuba's independent journalists had little reason to celebrate World Press Freedom Day on May 3. They continued to suffer harassment, intimidation and physical attacks. In Ciego de Avila, Jose Manuel Caraballo was recently punched in the street by an unknown person. The assailant smashed Caraballo's camera and warned him that he would be destroyed just like his camera. In Havana, Roberto Santana recently received an invitation to attend a videoconference organized by USINT. State Security officials met with him and told him that if he were to even leave his house on the day of the event, there would be "grave physical consequences." Also in Havana, State Security recently detained, interrogated and threatened journalist Luis Cino.

FARINAS FILE

¶6. (C) Hunger-striking independent journalist Guillermo Farinas, now up to Day 94 of his hunger strike, remained hospitalized in Santa Clara and hooked up to an IV, but was not beyond the reach of the GOC. Farinas said State Security agents recently visited his alma mater, the Superior Institute of Health Sciences, and tinkered with his file. Consequently, Farinas said, his GPA has gone from a 4.51 (on the 1-5 scale) to 4. In this way, he was stripped of his status as a former "exemplary student."

POLITICAL PRISONER IN PUNISHMENT CELL

¶7. (C) Political prisoner Fabio Prieto Llorente, serving 20 years for "acts against the independence or territorial integrity of the state," has been placed in a punishment cell, according to his sister. The sister, a "Lady in White" who recently visited Prieto at the Guayabo prison on the Isle of Youth, explained that he was served food on a filthy tray and asked for a clean one. The next day, Prieto, 43, was punched in the eye by a fellow inmate, in front of a guard who took no action. The same day, Prieto was sent to a punishment cell. His sister said he remains in good spirits but is suffering from emphysema, stomach woes and other ailments. The sister, for her part, was "completely strip-searched" on her way out of the prison by female guards "in order to humiliate me." The family's home in Nueva

Gerona was subjected to a 100-person "act of repudiation" on March 18, the third anniversary of the Black Spring crackdown. The sister said only about 20 in the crowd were actively participating; some were drinking, shouting profanities, and exposing their backsides.

VIGIL HELD FOR RELEASE OF POL PRISONERS

¶18. (C) Political prisoners were on the minds of 15 dissidents who took part in an April 28 vigil at the home of dissident Aurelio Bachiller. The organizer, Carlos Serpa, said participants called for the immediate release of all political prisoners and detainees. Serpa told us no arrests were made and that the event was undisturbed. Participants included members of two outlawed labor unions: the Independent National Workers Conference (CUNI) and the Union of Independent Light Industry Workers (SITIL).

PRESBYTERIAN LEADER: ONCE BITTEN TWICE SHY

¶19. (C) The Rev. Hector Mendez of the Presbyterian Reformed Church shared concerns about GOC intimidation of churches and clergy members, but acknowledged that he was afraid to speak too frankly. In 1990s, he explained, members of the NGO Pax Christi came to Havana, met with him, told him the discussions were off the record, and subsequently published materials that made clear he was the source. The regime, Mendez said, was not amused. He did not describe the reprisals.

COMMENT

¶10. Cuba's long-suffering activists continue to pay the price for Fidel Castro's zero-tolerance policy on dissent. We are bracing for a surge in GOC repression following the May 20 announcement of CAFC measures. Closer to home, we are wondering what prompted the GOC to deny, on May 3, exit permission to Flora Figueroa, USINT's Cuban nurse who was to travel to a health conference in Baltimore. She had traveled before to the United States on USINT-related medical business more than once. The Cuban Health Ministry allegedly told her it saw "no need" for her to travel at this time.

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